

IN SEARCH OF PATRIOTIC LEADERSHIP FOR THE NIGER DELTA

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Abstract

Like several other regional clusters and minority ethnic nationalities within the Nigerian federation, the Niger Delta is one of those that lost out to the three big ethnic groups in the discussions and agreement that culminated in Nigerian independence. Despite extensive literature on Niger Delta agitation, there is limited empirical examination of whether the region has produced truly patriotic leadership capable of sustained emancipation. This study addresses this gap. Using the theoretical frameworks of Elite theory and the Situational theory of leadership, the study examines the nature of leadership in the Niger Delta by exploring what the leadership of the various nationalities in the region have done to significantly alter the status quo. Based on the understanding that the successive leadership have so much to learn from the leadership history in the region, the paper seeks to find out if the Niger Delta can actually claim to have gotten its heroes with a strong voice for its emancipation from the big power politics of the ethnic majorities. Both qualitative and quantitative methods (using content analysis of submissions at national dialogues) were employed to profile the genre of leadership occupying the driver's seat in the Niger Delta of the twenty-first Century. The paper concludes with recommended patriotic virtues that leaders of the sub-region should imbibe and exhibit for its political and economic emancipation.

Keywords: Leadership, Patriotism, Niger Delta, Patriotic Leadership, Emancipation, Development.

Introduction

By 1960, the minority ethnic groups and nationalities within the emerging federation had sold off their birthright and autonomy to their respective regional majority ethnic groups during the discussions and negotiations at the constitutional conferences that heralded Nigeria's independence.

the minorities of Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Itsekiri, Isang, Urhobo, Anang, Efik were from ancient minorities in their own right, but their Leaders, however had to submit their own ethnic ambition within alliances with one of the three big ethnic groups, for them to attain greater results

politically (Achebe, 2012,p.47).

Throughout human history, philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Madison, J.S. Mill and Tocqueville have presented the tyranny of the majority, even in so-called democracies. It was Madison who clearly expressed this fear that ‘if the majority rules, nothing stops it from expropriating the minority’. This has always happened through leadership by the majority by enforcing either overtly or subtly, the wishes, desires, religion, language or culture of the majority over the minority.

The area known as Nigeria’s Niger Delta region has been home to a number of such ancient minorities cited by Achebe above. Its morphology is mainly that of flat lands with very gentle slopes and sandy beaches. According to Biakpara (2006), the crests, which are approximately 2 to 3 metres above sea level, are the sites of human settlements in the area. The troughs are frequently flooded (marshlands), mostly during high tides. The area is also known as the saltwater swamp zone. The wetland is said to have been formed by continuous deposition of suspended materials carried down by the Rivers Niger and Benue (World Bank, 1995). This wetland is the largest in the world, with about 5,400 - 6,000 square kilometres of fresh and blackish water (Adekola and Mitchell 2011). Its major estuaries as you move from west to east, are the Benin River, Escravos River, San Bartholomew River, Bonny River, Andoni River, Opobo River, and Cross River. It is characterized by very high rainfall, high humidity and gentle winds. Its setting makes it one of the most difficult terrains in Nigeria. In 1980, a flood delegation from North Korea stated that if the floods are controlled, about 700,000 hectares of arable land could be made available for agricultural development. Over 50 percent of the Niger Delta is water and is inundated with thousands of creeks. The area has been known to be a rich palm forest, which is considered because of its oil palm and fertile soil. The oil palm bears palm oil and kernel, and the area is also blessed with herbal plants, fish, reptiles and monkeys.

Yet the area has come to be known as very far richer than this. A significant portion of the area harbours significant quantities of hydrocarbon and natural gas deposits. The gas reserves have been proven to be around 176 trillion cubic feet, thus making Nigeria the largest gas-endowed country in Africa and one of the top ten in the world. Its oil reserves have been proven to be about 40 billion barrels.

The Niger Delta is the heart of Nigeria’s oil-dependent economy.

For over 50 years, wealth from the region has sustained the nation’s economy and stabilized the political system. The systematic plunder of the region’s resources has made it possible for resource-famished But politically dominant sections of Nigeria have more road bridges, modern communication, educational institutions, industries, real estate, and generations of billionaires than the Niger Delta states (Darah, 2014: Back Cover Page.

It is therefore not surprising that the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Act of 1999 defined the Niger Delta in terms of oil production. Consequently, the geopolitical area of the Niger Delta now comprises the states of Akwa-Ibom, Abia, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. Ibaba (2011) listed the Niger Delta region as having over 600 oil fields, 5,284 oil wells, 10 export terminals, 275 flow stations and the beginning of over 7,000 kilometres of pipelines criss-crossing the country. Niger Delta accounts for over 75 percent of the nation's oil production. The revenues from oil constitute the basis for the country's national budget, accounting for 80 percent of government funds, 95 percent of its export receipts and about 90 percent of export earnings (Ikelegbe, 2006; Idemudia, 2017). The extraction of oil and the politics of distributing oil revenue have often led to agitations for environmental security, social inclusion, and economic empowerment of those in the oil-bearing areas who are often exposed to the negative consequences of its extraction (Otuaro, 2021).

Several peaceful efforts aimed at redressing these contradictions have remained largely ineffective (Ibeanu, 2008). These efforts included dialogue, non-violent demonstrations, and occupation of oil companies' premises. Following the attack on Ijaw youths by armed soldiers after the Kaiama declaration on resource control in 1999, which led to the death of some youths, the youths retaliated by killing some policemen. These killers were alleged to have taken refuge in Odi town, leading to an invasion of Odi. Between the 1990s and the 2000s, various groups of the region's youths took to militant agitations in order to attract local and international attention to the plight of the oil-bearing communities. The era of armed insurgents and militia thus began with strategies and tactics that include hostage taking, hijacking, sabotage of oil pipelines, and kidnapping of expatriate workers.

Although a few influential persons from the region have been co-opted from time to time by the nation's power elites, the Niger Delta has remained largely excluded politically, marginalized economically, and insecure environmentally (Aaron, 2015). The leadership of the various nationalities in the Niger Delta have not done much to alter the status quo. Once having tasted the palliatives and spoils of office from the trappings of power through various appointments, they recline from further agitations to manage the rot in a federal system that goes on unhindered. Events and the realities on the ground have shown that this is far from the kind of leadership required to transform the Niger Delta and emancipate her peoples. This is the hallmark of patriotic leadership, which cannot be apolitical. A famous Harvard Sociologist, Daniel Bell wrote:

One wants men in political office who can govern well.

The quality of life in any society is determined, in considerable measure, by the quality of leadership. A society that does not have its best men at the head of its leading institutions is a sociological and moral absurdity (Cited from David-West, 1980, p.180).

Patriotic leadership is therefore tantamount to the philosopher king or ruler of Plato in ‘The Republic’. Some leaders have indeed been martyred while fighting for the cause of the Niger Delta. The question remains as to whether the successive leadership have learned from the footprints of history of leadership in the Niger Delta. In his ‘Foreword’ to a Niger Delta manual, Prof. B.I.C. Ijeoma quipped:

No doubt, the people of the Niger Delta have been impoverished, exploited and marginalized. What is annoying is that the exploiters do not believe they have done, or are doing, anything wrong. Worse still, the leaders of the Niger Delta appear to have tacitly condoned this infamous domestic colonialism (Biakpara, 2006).

Objectives

The objectives of this paper, therefore, are to:

1. Examine the nature and character of agitations and struggles for emancipation of the Niger Delta.
2. Examine responses from the Nigerian state through qualitative historical analysis;
3. Interrogate the profile of the Niger Delta leadership over time;
4. Recommend an agenda for the leadership of the Niger Delta region for effectiveness in a skewed federal system.

Conceptual Clarifications

Leadership

First there is an organized group of people. Second, this organized group has a goal or target to be achieved. It is the effort put into the process of influencing the activities of such an organized group to achieve its goal or target, or to change the behaviour of group members that constitutes ‘leadership’. Aderibigbe (2017) distinguishes ‘leadership’ from ‘supervision’. While a leadership position is a designated position of authority in an organizational chart, ‘supervision is influencing subordinates to do nothing more than simply fulfilling the minimum requirements of their jobs to avoid negative consequences.’ For him, leadership is action, not position and a process involving the organizing, and coordination of resources and energies in the context of productivity for an intended result. Leadership is of the spirit, compounded of personality and vision (Slim, 1996,p.399).

The qualities of leadership are said to include temperance, justice, sagacity, amiability, humanity, sympathy, helpfulness, courage, magnanimity, generosity, and considerateness (Adair, 2005,p.162). Other qualities include communicating hope, vision and mission, leading by inspiration to agree values, to create a great environment, crystallize aspirations and expectations, engage people fully in great projects, create and build a high-achieving ethic, and identify, develop and use talent (Williams, 2006).

On what constitutes a good leader, Tam David-West details the attributes of a good leader as being a servant of his followership, resist and renounce his deification by patronage-hunting sycophants, tolerate scepticism and criticism by his followership, always have his ears to the ground as against remaining detached in his olympian heights, must not use his followership to further his own selfish ends, and always undergoing self-examination or self-censorship to reflect on the kind of history being left behind for posterity (David-West, 1980,p.11-12).

Aderibigbe (2017) listed 180 definitions of leadership but went further to put them into categories. While some definitions see leadership as a focus of group process, movement and personality in action, some see it as the art of inducing compliance, yet others see leadership in terms of influence relationships, initiation of structure and perceived attributions of behaviour consistent with a certain belief pattern. Hence Bass (1960) admitted and cautioned that the definition applied in a particular study of leadership depends on the purpose of that study.

Patriotism

Like most concepts in the social sciences which end with the suffix ‘ism’, Patriotism has no generally accepted or concise definition. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines Patriotism as an expression of great love for one’s country. The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics defines it as ‘love of one’s country or zeal in defence of the interests of one’s country’. In this definition, patriotism is a deeply felt affective attachment centered on love for and pride in one’s nation. Patriotism stimulates nationalism, although it may not always be nationalistic.

As a word that has been so much abused in usage, it should not be confused as is often the case with words like allegiance, loyalty, obedience, cooperation and other terms. Rather these characteristics should flow from patriotism.

To confuse loyalty to a government with patriotism, either by assimilation or by subsumption, whichever way, would be fundamentally an error. Anyone may have very sound reasons for being disloyal to a given government; he may even express his disobedience - and he could, just for that reason alone, be a patriot. What follows from that, which would sound rather uncomfortable for those in public office, is that the government itself can be unpatriotic. In fact, that should not be a derivative of any linguistic analysis but a matter of practical experience,

our own experience that is. We are what we are today because we have so many unpatriotic governments, manned by unpatriotic leaders advised by unpatriotic experts and self-serving zealots. Unlike dissent or disloyalty, patriotism is neither relative in a temporal sense nor regime-determined (Sogolo, 2012, p. 90 - 91).

Thus, a patriot can also be an enthusiast for a cause that is other than national. According to Sogolo (2012), this implies that there are levels of patriotism within a nation, especially where other nations are found within a bigger nation.

But it is in relation to the nation-state that the genre of ‘patriotic nationalism’ emerges. It is also referred as official nationalism and ‘is built around the nation’s patriotism and the will of its citizens to associate the nation with the state’s patriotism. It encourages all those who are legally qualified or eligible to be citizens, regardless of their ethnic and cultural ties. Provided the action of the state promotes the common good, this form of nationalism stresses loyalty to the nation-state than loyalty to a nation or ethnic nationality (Otuaro, 2021, p.27).

Patriotic Leadership

Plato’s philosopher king envisages a leader who is just, truthful, disciplined, courageous, wise and devoid of emotional and economic ties and considerations. This is the genre of patriotic leadership. It is a desideratum for effective state-society interactions as it is characterized by selflessness, legitimacy, dedication to service and effective management of human and material resources. Patriotic leaders exhibit these exceptional qualities, and go further to make significant sacrifices for their nation’s survival, independence, advancement and territorial integrity.

Thus, a juxtaposition of the conceptual meanings of patriotism and leadership will have patriotic leadership to imply a good and zealous leadership which solidly rests on the foundation of love and progress.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Elite theory is the first theoretical framework deployed in this paper. It originated from the classic writings of Pareto in his “Circulation of Elites” (1968), Mosca in his “Theory of the Ruling Class” (1939), and Michel in the “Theory of Iron law of Oligarchy” (1966). It is a theory of the state which describes and explains power relationships in modern society. The theory buttresses the oligarchical tendencies of the state, and it simply states that the most power in a state is held and exercised by a small minority consisting of members of the economic and policy-planning networks. This power does not emanate from democratic elections but rather from the positions held by this minority in state apparatuses or institutions where they exert tremendous power over corporate and government decisions.

The theory was developed as an alternative paradigm to pluralism. According to Mosca, it rejects the pluralist view of power being distributed in society, but rather emphasizes that power is

concentrated in the hands of a minority group. This group forms all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys all the advantages that power provides. From this perspective of Elite theory, therefore, what emerges as public policy are merely the values and preferences of the governing elite. Thus, public policy no longer reflects the demand of the masses but rather the prevailing values of this small minority group. Therefore, any change in public policy can never be fundamental or revolutionary but only incremental.

The three classical elite theorists above agree that elites selfishly utilize political authority by maneuvering state powers to retain and maintain their power status. They go further to state that the elites are unified in their interests due to a common background and positions, unlike the masses, who are divided and diverse.. Consequently, they are subject to relatively very little direct influence from the masses, who are apathetic. Therefore, elites influence masses far more than the masses influence elites. For Vergara (2013, p.31), elites are constantly searching for avenues to differentiate themselves, pulling themselves apart from the masses.

Higley (2008, p.3) answers the question of who is an elite. According to him, “elites may be defined as persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially.” This means that an elite has the necessary information and reach that is required to influence political outcomes. He or she is therefore constantly deploying enlightened self-interest to ensure that the status quo is maintained. Bottomore (1964, p.3) goes further to distinguish the ‘political elite’, a smaller group within the political class as:

all those groups who actually exercise political power in a society at any time given time. The extent of the political elite is, therefore, relatively easy to determine: it will include members of the government and of the high administration, military leaders, and, in some cases, politically influential families of an aristocracy or royal house, and leaders of powerful economic enterprises.

The second theoretical framework is the Situational theory of leadership. It is also known as the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership theory, named after its two proponents - Dr. Paul Hersey who wrote ‘The Situational Leader’ and Kenneth Blanchard, who authored the book ‘One-Minute Manager’. The theory states that leadership is specific and relative to the situation in which it occurs. Leadership is something that emerges, grows and is achievement-oriented. Beyond certain personality and performance qualities or traits, and beyond past acceptance, ‘Leadership is a function of situation, culture, the context, and the customs of a group or an organization, quite as much as it is a function of personal attributes and group requirements’ (Ross and Charles, 1957; Aderibigbe, 2017, p.:104). Therefore, a leader may display different traits of personality to deal with diverse problems.

The most effective leaders are those who can adapt their style to the situation, taking into consideration all the factors required to get the job done. The theory's approach to leadership avoids the pitfalls of a single-leadership style approach by recognizing that different ways exist to deal with a problem and that leaders need to be able to assess a situation and the levels of maturity of subordinates.

The theory identifies four situational leadership styles, namely Directing, Coaching, Supporting and Delegating.

Methodology

The documentary research method is adopted in this paper, with relevant content and information drawn from extant literature and related sources. The study adopts a mixed-methods design combining qualitative documentary analysis and quantitative content analysis. Thus, the approach is basically exploratory and qualitative, relying on observation and published materials which include textbooks, Journals, newspapers, official records and documents to source data. However in order to analyze the pattern of agitations and demands by the leadership of the Niger Delta, the quantitative method was employed, with Content analysis used as a technique to analyze their submissions at the last two national conferences in 2005 and 2014. In this quantitative analytical effort, the selection of four core Niger Delta states was based on their historical prominence in agitation movements.

Literature Review

This review commences with a discourse on major leadership theories, definitions and meanings, then delves into the background, nature and character of the Nigerian leadership since inception, the Niger Delta environment and its socio-political milieu, the various leadership types that this milieu has thrown up before and after independence, the nature of responses by the Nigerian state at various times, and various measures to placate both the leadership and people of the Niger Delta region.

Conceptualization of Leadership and Overview of Political Leadership in Nigeria

Conceptualizing the phenomenon of leadership has remained very intriguing in several sociological and psychological studies, the literature on leadership is replete with various schemas and models of leadership. For instance, the German Sociologist, Max Weber approached the typology of leadership from the concept of legitimacy to authority and came up with three types of leadership, namely, the traditional (as in monarchical systems), the legal-rational (based on the system of laws prevalent in the society), and charismatic (based on personality cults) types of leadership.

Whereas writers like Deverell (cited in David-West, 1980, p.177) identified the universal traits of a successful leader to include a strong desire for achievement, a positive view of the function of

authority, the ability to organize people, decisiveness, activity or vitality, orientation to reality, mental maturity or self-control in the face of difficulties, MacGregor asserts that successful leadership does not depend on the possession of a single set of inborn characteristics. According to him, 'It is more useful to consider leadership as a relationship between the leader and the situation, than as a universal pattern of characteristics possessed by certain people' (cited in David-West, 1980, p.177). MacGregor also further stated that 'a leader cannot avoid the exercise of authority any more than he could avoid responsibility for what happens to his organization.

Therefore a leader's relevance exists only in the context of his functional relationship to the group. This functional relationship exists when the group perceives the leader as controlling the means to satisfy the group's ends (Knicker Bocker). The group constitutes the followership, which is not based on mere pious hopes of what is likely to be achieved by the leader but rather based on concrete expectations of what the leader can actually achieve for them, members of the group.

Leadership is a function of needs existing within a given situation,
and consists of a relationship between an individual and a group when
conceived in terms of dynamic human social behaviour
(Knicker Bocker, 1948).

Other than this functional relationship, there is the Interactional theory of Gibbs which conceptualizes leadership as a product of personal endowments of the individual and the inter-personal or inter-group interaction.

Several other meanings and definitions of leadership abound. A leader is someone who is always the nucleus of a tendency, and all social movements, closely examined, will be found to consist of tendencies having such nuclei (Cooley, 1902). For Kissinger, 'a leader is a person who gets his people from where they are to where they have not been'. According to Myles Munroe (1993), 'Leadership is the capacity to influence, inspire, rally, direct, encourage, motivate, induce, move, mobilize and activate others to pursue a common goal or purpose while maintaining commitment, momentum, confidence and courage. Elsewhere in the same work, he put it more simply as 'the organizing and coordinating of resources, energies and relationships in a productive context for an intended result'. An unknown author stated that 'Leadership is powerful and restless with the status quo, they are always trying to improve, to create vision, and to push back the limits of possibility (cited in Aderibigbe, 2017, p.19). For Charles Swindoll, 'leadership is not optional. It is the ingredient essential to the success of any organization. Take away Leadership and confusion replaces vision (also cited in Aderibigbe, 2017, p. 21).

From the above conceptual overview, it is obvious that no matter the leadership schema chosen, leadership remains a function of personality, a function of the socio-political environment, and a function of the mutual interaction of them all.

Leadership in Nigeria in the first republic was based more on personality cults, as the strongman syndrome or charismatic personality emerged among the three big regional political leaders of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa. It was reinforced by tribal or ethnic considerations from which they drew further legitimacy. In the words of David-West, 'tribe was the leverage. Tribe was the polar star, although there was now and then a glib expedient reference to the nation' (David-West, 1980, p.178). It was a period in Nigeria's history of powerful tribal unions. These tribal unions held sway and operated like secret societies.

Leadership at that time was to all intents and purposes a "Sentimental Leadership". Leadership was idolised and transmuted into semi- or demi-gods or supermen. During this period, we also produced a large pool of sycophants and hosanna-Chanters who were very quick to administer to the basal sentiments of the Leadership. I am not at all suggesting that sycophants and sly Yes-Men were not (or are not) found in all the other phases of the history of leadership in Nigeria. We failed in the First Republic because we talked more of tribe and less of nation. It was even strongly suggested that the emergence of a truly national Leader in Nigeria was utopian (David-West, 1980, p. 178-179).

By 1979, the new Constitution had some safeguards built in to prevent the re-emergence of tribal leadership. However, the nation's experience has shown that Nigeria must have leaders who 'spiritually' believe in the nation, far beyond mere constitutional safeguards or constitutional engineering. The story of Nigeria's leadership has not departed from this ever since.

Nigerian Leadership since Colonialism and Independence

The emergence of this ethno-regional pattern of leadership in Nigeria's political space is very central to understanding the issue of political leadership in any part of Nigeria's federation as today, this dual phenomenon of ethnicity and regionalism pervades Nigeria's state structure.

Before colonial rule, several parts of Nigeria had their own traditional systems of administration which were either centralized or non-centralized. These included the Kanuri, the Yorubas, the Igbos, the Ijaws, the Ibibios, the Binis, the Tivs, the Idomas, Efiks, Isangs, Annangs, Itsekiris, the Urhobos, the Nupes, and several other ethnic nationalities spread across the south and north of Nigeria's geographical space.

For the other parts of northern Nigeria, the first people to occupy the area were the Hausas, traditionally called the 'Habbes. This was before the arrival of the Fulanis. The Hausas were originally cult worshippers (the Bori cult), and they, like most other parts of Nigeria practiced a communal system of land ownership. The Fulanis were said to have migrated to Northern Nigeria from the Senegal River Valley in the late 16th Century.

By the early 19th C, a centralized Islamic administration known as the Sokoto Caliphate had been imposed by the Fulanis following the conquest of the Hausa Kingdoms by the Fulani leader named Othman Dan Fodio. The administration was run by regional chiefs called Emirs, who ruled over large areas known as Emirates. Till this day, the Sokoto emirate remains the dynastic group of Othman Dan Fodio and it is split into North-West (Sokoto, Gwandu), South-East (Adamawa, Muri,, Bauchi, Gombe), North-East (Kazuare, Katagun, Hadejia, Jamai, Misawa), South-West (Katangora, Agai, Lapai, Lafiagi, Pategi), and the central Sokoto empire (Keffi, Lafia, Jama, Wase). The Emir of Gwandu is traditionally the second-in-command to the Sultan of Sokoto (Chinweizu, 2013:5). The emirate of Daura was the oldest, consisting of the ‘Bakwai’ made up of Katsina, Kano, Zaria, among others, whereas the ‘Banza-Bakwai’ or inferior group was made up of Kebi, Yauri, Nupe, and Ilorin. Next is the emirates that are independent and which the Fulanis do not control (Abuja, Bogui, Biu). Then there are the emirates derived from the Bornu empire (namely Dikwa, Gumel, Fika, Bedde).

Presently, the Hausa and Fulani are said to constitute the largest ethnic group in Northern Nigeria. The distinction which existed between them has since been blurred by intermarriage and cultural assimilation such that Nigerians refer to them in compound form as “Hausa-Fulani” (Siollun, 2009, p.12). A binding factor among all the emirates remains the religious factor after they were conquered by the Fulanis in the 1804 Jihad.

With colonial rule, the authority of the emirs was strengthened. Indeed, the structure of British administration corresponded with the existing pre-colonial structure, which was merely re-organized. Apart from abolishing the rights of officials in the pre-colonial system and replacing it with native police, there was a class alliance between the British colonial officials and the emirs. In this way, the political superstructure of the pre-colonial state was strengthened by its co-option into the new British political superstructure (Smith, 1960; Whitaker, 1970; Paden, 1973; Dudley, 1968).

Nigeria is a country with over 250 ethnic groups, with the 3 major ethnic groups of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani always dominating national politics. According to Agbiboa (2017), these dominant ethnic groups can be divided further into sub-groups comprising 29 distinct divisions within the Hausa-Fulani, 12 distinct groups among the Yoruba, and 32 within the Igbo communities. But throughout Northern Nigeria, the emirate system has continued to dominate the political structure.

Independence saw Nigeria emerging as a creation of capitalist imperialism and, like other African nations, adopting the Western model of political development that emphasized structural differentiation and specificity of functions as models of development for economic growth. Thus, ‘development’ throughout Nigeria’s first republic was perceived in terms of increasing the material well-being of the nation, albeit within the British political framework. Thenceforth, its

developmental strategy became as dictated by the interests of imperialism and its local allies (Agagu and Ola, 2007, p.13).

As observed by Amucheazi (1980, p.4), the Nigerian leadership at independence failed to tackle the political dimension of the development concept seriously from inception. Having inherited the British parliamentary system, nothing was done to change it or to alter the political structure of the country. Also, the civic culture required for the practice of this inherited system and structure was lacking, as the trend of political debates and opposition was to show. The Nigerian parliament turned the forum into championing ethnic and sectional interests (Mackintosh, 1966). No government policy was considered from the viewpoint of the national interest; there was no acceptable census, as each regional government sought to manipulate the figures. At the federal level, it was not possible to come up with an acceptable revenue allocation formula. It was even reported that in the allocation and citing of industrial projects, experts were influenced to bring up unfavorable reports against certain sections of the country (Amucheazi, 1980, p.5). This way, the major ethnic groups had their say and way, while the minority ethnic groups in the regions were grossly marginalized.

In like manner, the administrative class or bureaucrats were deeply involved in sectional, ethnic manipulations and corruption with the politicians, aiding election rigging, census manipulation and poor implementation of development projects. Consequently, the gap grew wider between the ethnic groups and the regions.

The military came into the Nigerian political scene with its own concept of leadership and development, as that of the maintenance of law and order and the increase in the production of material goods. By the time they were planning to exit power, a system of local administration was introduced. But the performance of these local councils was abysmal as the involvement of local communities was not considered. The military also superintended the making of a new constitution patterned after the American presidential system to replace the British parliamentary model, another foreign model, without giving due consideration to culture and the imperatives of national integration.

Soon after he came to power, Gowon set up a constitutional conference and charged participants to evolve a new arrangement entirely different from what exists in the political lexicon, rather than limiting the search for solutions to familiar political systems. Several decades later, and with other subsequent constitutional conferences, this 'Political Eldorado' is yet to be reached. More importantly, the old alignments have persisted among political parties along ethnic and regional lines. This has been due to the presence and influence of the old political leaders from the first republic. It has been very difficult to separate the legacies of the past from present-day political party activities.

Thus, this problem of integration of the country is said to have partly arisen from 'the structural arrangements deliberately created by the British to foster their imperial interests' (Amucheazi,

1980, p.21). This has led to the polarization of the country's political, military, educational, economic and even religious institutions along ethno-regional/tribal lines. The post-colonial policies guiding these institutions continued in the same pattern and never provided equal opportunities to all.

In the northern part of the country, the emirate system has continued to dominate the political structure, and its configuration continues to exist within the present system of the Nigerian state. Indeed, the entire country can be grouped into two social clusters, namely the feudal-dominated and the non-feudal cluster. Incidentally, this grouping also reflects and represents the two conflicting types of political personality that have come to be the basic problem confronting Nigeria and its leadership since independence viz, the caliphate-emirate personality and the non-feudal liberal political personality (Nzimiro, 1979, 1988). Chinweizu (2013:7) regards the two conflicting ideologies associated with these personalities as that of Feudal-theocracy versus Secular-democracy. But it has proven to be a conflict in which the feudal-caliphate forces hold sway. A principal ideologue of this dominant force in the person of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, once said in 1960:

The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great-grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities of the North as willing tools and the South as a conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us, and never allow them to have control over their future." (Tribune Newspaper, 2002).

Elsewhere this same ideologue of northern hegemony is reckoned to have stated: I regret the mistake of 1914.

Also from the same personality during the 1953 Constitutional Conference Debates, "I would rather be called Sultan of Sokoto than President of Nigeria"

From the Western region in 1947, it was heard from Chief Obafemi Awolowo that "Nigeria is a mere geographical expression".

For the former Prime Minister, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, during the 1948 House of Representatives Debates,

Many (Nigerians) deceive themselves that Nigeria is one, particularly some of the press people. This is wrong. I am sorry to say that the presence of this unit is artificial.

More than 20 years after the end of the Nigerian Civil War, Chief Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu asserted in his book BECAUSE I AM INVOLVED that. "Nigeria has not come into existence."

It is worthy to note that according to the results of various census exercises, the bulk of Nigeria's population is said to be found within the boundaries of the former feudal kingdoms, even as the results of all the census exercises have remained contestable over time.

Indeed, political life in post-colonial Nigeria has been riddled with calls, threats, counter-threats and actualization of threats for secession, confederation or other forms of separation by ethno-regional champions from various parts of the country.

At independence, the 1960 Constitution became the only legitimate basis for the different nationalities to associate. The issues that were yet to be resolved were the fears of minorities on:

- The unbalanced federal structure.
- The creation of more regions.

Incidentally, the Constitutional Conference of 1960 failed to work with the recommendations of the 1958 Willinks Commission Report, which was supposed to allay the fears of minorities during the final preparations for Nigeria's independence.

Consequently, the country's minorities continued their agitations for the creation of their own regions during the early years of Nigeria's independence. Among these, only the Midwest Region was created.

The ethnicization and regionalisation of leadership and politics continued and became more deeply entrenched with the failure of the first military coup:

Ethnic tensions increased after a military coup in January 1966, led by Major Kaduna Chukwuma Nzeogwu. The coup was seen by the Northerners as an attempt by the Igbos to dominate the country. This led to a counter coup led by the Northerners a few months later. In the counter coup, Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo Major General, who was the then Head of State, was killed and widespread reprisals were unleashed against the Igbos in the Northern part of the country. Fearing marginalization within the state, on May 30, 1967 the Eastern region, dominated by the Igbos, declared its independence as the Republic of Biafra (Ebegbulem, 2011).

Thus, it was Ojukwu, Military Governor of the Eastern Region at the time who finally embarked on the secession course three years later, much in line with the initial plan prepared by Okpara. Within the other regions, were also calls for secession? Isaac Sha'ahu of the UMBC had in the Northern House of Assembly in February 1964 declared that the Tiv very much felt unwanted and threatened secession due to the perceived marginalization of the Tiv elite and state repression in the Tiv territory.

The southeastern parts comprising the Niger Delta states of today, and at the time under the Eastern region also had another echo of secession:

The transition from threats to an actual attempt at secession was made on 23 February 1966 when Isaac Boro decided that he was not ready to live in a Nigeria that was ruled by Igbos. He, therefore, declared the independence of the Niger Delta Peoples' Republic following the first coup and the establishment of the Ironsi Regime. Boro had become very disturbed about perceived Igbo domination of Eastern minorities since his days as a student activist at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. His Republic lasted for only twelve days, the time it took the police to round up his rag-tag army of 159 volunteers. Isaac

Boro

and his colleagues were charged with treason in March and condemned to death in June 1966. Boro was eventually released at the onset of the Nigerian civil war when he joined the Federal side and was killed in battle in 1968, fighting for the liberation of Rivers State from the Igbo on the platform of the Federal Government of Nigeria (Jega, 2000, p.46).

It is pertinent to note that most of the discrimination against minorities in the south is related to ethnicity while that of the northern minority has been ethno-religious.

While the Northern memorandum to the 2014 National Conference was silent on the protection of minorities in Nigeria, the memorandum from the northern ethnic minorities emphatically agitated as follows:

It has been acknowledged the world over that without a deliberate policy and constitutional safe guards, minorities and indigenous populations do not survive the onslaught of the majority. It is also true that democracy is not defined as a game of numbers but as a government of the people, for the people and by the people. In countries where inclusive governance is practiced, special seats in parliaments are reserved for minorities and groups that cannot, under normal circumstances be part of government. It is our belief that Nigeria needs to develop a more equitable constitutional framework to help safeguard the minorities in line with international conventions and practices (Section 4.5.0 page 10 of Ethnic Minorities Memorandum).

The Niger Delta, Protests and Agitations

The region is home to over 30 million inhabitants (Ikelegbe and Umukoro, 2016), which figure represents about 22 percent of Nigeria's population (Olalekan and Mitchell, 2011). The people of the Niger Delta belong to different ethnic groups and in this way contributes its own share to Nigeria's diversity and plurality. The region's ethnic groups include the Ilaje, Binis, Ibibio, Efik, Ijaw, Isoko, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ndokwa, Ogoni, Ukwani (Osaghae, et al 2007)

Over 60 percent of Niger Deltans depend directly on the environment for their livelihoods. But frequent oil spillage and gas flaring arising from the exploitation of oil and gas resources have created enormous challenges. Kadafa (2012) put the figure of oil spillages between 1976 and 1996 at 4,547 incidences. Between 2000 and 2010, about 1,000 cases of oil spills were recorded (Aworawo, 2013), and from 1960 to 2010, a period of about half a century, about 9 to 13 million barrels were spilled in the region. It was alleged by Seriake Dickson, former Governor of Bayelsa state that the region witnessed over 1,000 cases of environmental pollution incidents within one year (Adedapo, 2016). In a UNEP Report commissioned by the Nigerian Federal Government in 2006, it was stated that the Ogoni people live with pollution every minute for the 365 days in a year. With an average life expectancy in Nigeria put at less than 50 years, it is assumed that most members of the Ogoni community have lived with chronic oil pollution throughout their lives. The Report further stated that it would take 30 years to clean up Ogoni community and at a cost of US\$1 billion (Alike, 2016). However, the Ogoni clean-up finally commenced in 2017 under the Buhari administration. Nevertheless, it has left more to be desired due to actions that are non-substantive.

Oil spillage has continued to have disastrous consequences on the entire region, displacing the vast majority from their traditional employment of fishing and farming. Gas flaring, too, has added its own nuisance value as emissions are said to be a cause of terminal diseases like cancer, chronic bronchitis, asthma, blood disorders, etc. Yet this is a region where the 20 million people have very little or no access to functional health care. The Energetic Solution Conference held in 2004 noted that there are about 123 gas flaring sites in the Niger Delta region (Kadafa, 2012), and the gas flared in the Niger Delta accounts for about 12.5 percent of the gas flared in the world (Chizea and Osumah, 2017). The end of gas flaring is nowhere in sight as both the Federal government and the oil companies have continued to shift the goal post of promises and deadlines, starting with 1984, then 2004, later 2006, 2008, 2012, 2020.

Even before the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in February 1956, agitations for an equitable federal system, autonomy and self-determination started in the Niger Delta region way back in the 1930s, long before Nigeria's independence, with the formation of groups as the Urhobo Progress Union led by Chief Mukoro Mowoe, the Oron Union, the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers state movement of 1953 under the leadership of Dr. Udo Udoma, Dr. Okoi Arikpo, Chief Dappa Biriye, Wennike Briggs and others (Darah, 2014). The request for political autonomy and state creation for the region was presented by this state movement to the Willink Commission of 1957 -58. The Commission as stated earlier, was set up to investigate the complaints of the minorities and how to allay their fears. After rejecting the demand for state creation in their report on the grounds that this would delay the granting of independence, the Commission recommended the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) for the Ijaw areas specifically. The Board's mandate was enshrined in the Independence Constitution of 1960. But the Board was said to have failed on account of

inadequate funding from the federal government and the then three regional governments (Darah, 2014: 21).

In 1963, the Midwestern Region was created by plebiscite out of the Western region - a product of minority agitation.

New movements, namely the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ijaw National Congress (INC), Association of Minority Oil States (AMOS) led by Dr. Ibru, and the Movement for National Reformation (MNR) led by Chief Anthony Enahoro were formed in the 1990s. Under the leadership of Ken Saro-Wiwa, MOSOP championed a radical change in the oil industry's operations and submitted to the Babangida administration a memorandum demanding autonomy over their oil resources, the payment of \$30 billion reparations, a clean-up and remediation of the environment in Ogoni land. The Southern Minorities Movement (SMM) was another organization that was formed in 1994, which submitted a memorandum to Abacha's 1994 - 95 Constitutional Conference to demand revenue allocation of 50 percent minimum on derivation basis, and power devolution through the 6 geopolitical zones to be created in the country.

Writing about the impact of these movements on the Niger Delta struggle, Darah noted that:

the Boro movement and MOSOP struck at the heart of the Nigerian imperial and unitary system. Their interventions challenged the political economy of the oil industry by demanding sovereign rights over natural resources. The MOSOP protest, though conducted without arms, led to the closure of oil facilities in Ogoni land of Rivers State. This threatened the volume of Nigeria's production and revenue. MOSOP also propagated its demands for economic and environmental justice to the United Nations and other global theatres of democratic politics (Darah, 2014, p.24 - 25).

The tempo of protests from the Niger Delta was still rising when General Abacha convoked the 1994 - 95 National Political Reform Conference (NPRC). The Niger Delta leaders attended the Conference with a demand for an increase in derivation from 3 to 50 percent. The outcome was the inclusion of the clause 'not less than 13%' on Derivation in the report. This clause was later incorporated into the 1999 Constitution as Section 162 (2).

Yet again, the Niger Delta struggle resonated at the 2005 National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) convoked by Obasanjo and later the 2014 National Conference convoked by President Jonathan. In these conferences, however, all proposals for reforms and elimination of obnoxious laws by the Niger Delta delegates were strongly resisted and opposed by most delegates from the Northern States, who preferred that the status quo should remain. The Niger Delta leaders and delegates were rallied by Chief Edwin K. Clark, especially during the 2014 Conference to present a united and formidable front. However, the extent to which the Niger Delta cause was articulated

and presented at the conferences is very arguable. This is taken up in the section on Quantitative Data Analysis after this review..

In August 2016, the Pan Niger Delta Development Forum (PANDEF) was formed as an institutional and sustainable platform for the pursuit and promotion of the Niger Delta cause and to promote and foster peace, security and inter-ethnic harmony. Chief E. K. Clark was the leader and vocal mouthpiece of the organization. A first republic politician, Chief Clarke later served in the first post-civil war military administration first, as Bendel State Commissioner for Finance, later as Commissioner for Education under Ogbemudia tenure, before his elevation to the post of Federal Commissioner for Information in the administration under General Gowon.. He was a foremost propagandist of that regime and grew to become a trusted confidante of the Gowon era. With the coming of Murtala Muhammed after the overthrow of General Gowon, Chief Edwin Clark was the only one among all the Federal Commissioners who served in Gowon's regime to have several of his properties and assets confiscated in 1975 by the new khaki men in power.

Responses by the Nigerian State to the Niger Delta: From Repression to Resistance of the Niger Delta Struggle

Scholars like Ayodele in (Agagu 2007) have asserted that the Nigerian post-colonial State is "*inherently a violent institution* with repression, suppression and intimidation as its essential attributes. Ikelegbe (2013, p.196) implicated the nature and weaknesses of the Nigerian State. According to him,

The Nigerian state has been weak in successful mediation and arbitration among the competing groups. The state itself was dominated by certain groups and deployed to dominate, suppress and exclude others. The state has been associated with sectional, regional, ethnic and religious interests. It is seen as acting on behalf of and being used to further the interests of some groups (Ikelegbe, 2013, p.196).

He went further to state that the character of the political elite and ruling class has also followed the same pattern. Rather than championing national causes, "*the elite have been parochial, primordially biased and have been champions of regional, religious and ethnic based interests.*

These credentials and capacity of the Nigerian post-colonial State to execute and administer violence were also shown succinctly in putting down various insurrections, starting from Isaac Boro's armed resistance and insurgency in 1966. The resistance of Urhobo women in the 1980s against oil exploitation has been documented (Ekeh, 2006; Darah, 2014). In 1984 a nude protest was organized by women of Oghara who occupied the premises of the American Pan-Ocean Oil Corporation to demand provision of water and electricity, compensation payment for seized lands and the remediation of the polluted environment. Another group of women, this time women from

Uvwie held a mass protest against the NNPC over the non-inclusion of the local people in employment and loss of farm lands. Shell production sites were also occupied by Eghwu-Ughelli women for weeks for failure to construct the single-lane road that led to the community. The killings of the traditional ruler and people of Umuechem in Ikwerre local government of Rivers State in 1990, the bloody suppression of the Ogoni revolt, wherein the number involved in the death toll is still not ascertained, and accompanied by gross violations of human rights and several atrocities perpetuated by the police death squads. In 1998, the Ijaw Youth Congress was held in Kaiama and issued a landmark declaration on resource control.

We cease to recognize all undemocratic decrees that rob our people/communities of the right to ownership and control of our lives and resources, which were enacted without our participation and consent. These include the Land Use Decree and the Petroleum Decree.

While stating that:

We agree to remain within Nigeria but to demand and work for Self-Government and resource control for the Ijaw people (Kaiama Declaration, December 1998).

This Declaration by the Ijaw Youth Council marked the birth of the call for resource control. It was echoed repeatedly by the media and the elected legislators and state governors from the Niger Delta took up and intensified the campaign through public lectures, rallies, demonstrations by political groups, trade unions and other civil society organizations. Several meetings were held by the state governors in Asaba, the Delta state capital, whose strategies for mass mobilizations immensely politicized and boosted the call for increase in the derivation formula and resource control.

The invasion of Odi town under Obasanjo's Presidency was in search of youths who were alleged to be hiding in Odi after a reprisal killing by Ijaw Youths. In 2022, the women of Itsekiri, Ijaw and Ilaje (inhabitants of the main mangrove and water-logged coastal areas) occupied oilfields and facilities of Chevron and Shell to protest the unemployment of locals, pollution of waters and environment, and lack of water and electricity without attempting to tackle the underlying 'fundamental issues of economic exploitation, political repression and resource ownership' (Darah, 2014, p.22).

Just as the Nigerian state responded to Boro's movement by sentencing the insurgents to death before they were granted amnesty by Gowon to join the federal military government in prosecuting the war against secessionist Biafra, Ken Saro-Wiwa and his 8 Ogoni compatriots were hanged by the Abacha military junta on November 10, 1995.

Thus, resistance has ranged from outright suppression through killings, armed invasion by military or police actions that resulted in several killings, jailing, trial and imprisonment, to the extension of what might better be referred as palliatives, where negotiations with the various leaderships of

these movements have been involved. The use of palliatives to placate measures is taken up in the next section.

Measures to Placate

For instance, the Babangida administration's response to the formation of protest groups was to set up in 1992 the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC). This Commission was designed to be funded from 3 percent oil revenue. However, only a small fraction of the funds was released throughout its decade of existence.

When the Obasanjo civilian administration came on board in May 1999, it refused to implement the minimum of 13 percent derivation Conference recommendation because of the "resource control" campaign coming from the Niger Delta states (Darah, 2014, p.28). However, due to the highly politicized and pervasive campaigns, it reluctantly agreed to begin the implementation of the derivation clause from April 2000. .

Again, in order to be seen as addressing the agitation of Niger Deltans, the Obasanjo administration established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in the year 2000. The scope of coverage of the Commission includes the 9 oil-producing states of Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Bayelsa, Edo, Cross River, Ondo, Abia and Imo States. The Commission's sources of funding include contributions from the member states, 3 percent of the total annual budget of oil and gas companies, and 50 percent of funds meant for member states from the Ecological Fund.

It has prepared a comprehensive master plan of projects for the development of the area. But just like its historical antecedent - the OMPADEC - the NDDC has never had adequate funds to execute its mandate. Darah elaborates further:

All the revenue the Commission gets in a year is not more than one-fifth the annual budget of one of the leading oil states. In fact, in the 2014 Federal Budget, only N61.9billion was allocated to the NDDC, about one-third of the budget for the National Assembly. Even statutory allocations to the NDDC are sometimes withheld by the Federal Government; when this happens, the members of the board are expected to engage in lobbying in Abuja to secure the release. The commission is not likely to have the financial wherewithal to handle the strategic physical infrastructure of highways, bridges, and waterways transportation. There are over 200 big rivers in the NDDC mandate area that would have to be bridged for roads to reach the communities in the creeks. NDDC is further burdened by demands for water supply, education, health, electricity, housing, sanitation, and environmental restoration (Darah, 2014, p.37-38).

When the nation's economy was threatened with bankruptcy and collapse owing to the sharp reduction in output of oil in the face of colossal damage to oil and gas facilities by the increased

and intensified activities of armed militia groups in the Niger Delta, the Yar'Adua administration took to the peaceful option of granting amnesty to all those in the armed struggle against the federal government. A post-amnesty rehabilitation programme was put in place for the over 26,000 militants who surrendered their weapons. The amnesty programme took effect from 2009.

Other placating measures include the creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in 2007, approval and establishment of a Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenkoko (an Ijaw community that was almost wiped out by military invasion in 2009). Also, a Petroleum Industry Bill was submitted in 2004, but it took so long to be processed by the National Assembly.

It was after engagements with leaders and representatives of the Niger Delta under the aegis of PANDEF that the Buhari administration launched its agenda for the 'peace, security and development' of the region titled 'New Vision for the Niger Delta' (NEVIND). This agenda saw an increase to 71 billion naira in the budgetary allocation to NDDC, 53.89 billion naira to the Ministry of Niger Delta in the 2018 budget, an increase in the take-off grant to the new Maritime University in Okerenkoko from 2 billion to 5 billion naira, and the cleanup programme for Ogoni land as recommended by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It was also during the Buhari administration that the age-long Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) was finally passed by the Nigerian parliament and signed into law.

Quantitative Data Presentation

This paper has found the need to study the level of commitment to the Niger Delta cause by state-sponsored official delegates on the one hand, and other groups/associations in the Niger Delta on the other. It is based on their participation in the 2005 and 2014 Conferences. Four variables have been identified as representing the Niger Delta cause. These are agitations for minority rights, self-determination, derivation/true federalism and resource control. These variables were selected based on their prominence in Niger Delta discourse.

Data is derived from the memoranda submitted by the two categories to the two conferences. The sample was based on the submission of the two categories from four (4) core states out of the nine (9) states of the Niger Delta. The states are Akwa Ibom, Edo, Rivers and Delta. A total sample size of 53 was used, made up as follows: Data were coded using the thematic content of the above-stated four content categories. Thereafter, frequencies were converted into percentages.

2005

Official Delegates - 4 (Each state delegation has one count as they could only submit one memorandum)

Groups/Associations - 21

2014

Official Delegates - 4

Groups/Associations - 24

Total Sample Size = 53 (A sample size of 53 memoranda was considered adequate due to the limited number of official submissions).

A content analyses of the memoranda submitted by these two categories on the identified variables are presented in the tables below:

Table 1:

Content Analysis of Niger Delta Agitations (2005)

STATE	SOURCE OF MEMORANDA	ISSUES				TOTAL	PERCENTAGES
		MINORITY RIGHTS	SELF-DETERMINATION	DERIVATION/TRUE FEDERALISM	RESOURCE CONTROL		
AKWA A- IBOM	Official Delegates	-	-	1	1	2	3.77
	Groups/Associations	1	-	2	3	6	11.32
EDO	Official Delegates	-	-	1	1	2	3.77
	Groups/Associations	-	-	-	-	0	0
RIVER S	Official Delegates	-	-	-	-	0	0
	Groups/Associations	1	-	2	3	6	11.32
DELT A	Official Delegates	1	-	-	1	2	3.77
	Groups/Associations	2	1	2	3	8	15.10
	TOTALS	5 9.43%	1 1.88%	8 15.09%	12 22.64%		

Source: Author's Fieldwork

Table 2:

Content Analysis of Niger Delta Agitations (2014)

STATES	SOURCE OF MEMORANDA	ISSUES				TOTAL	PERCENTAGES
		MINORITY RIGHTS	SELF-DETERMINATION	DERIVATION/TRUE FEDERALISM	RESOURCE CONTROL		
AKWA-IBOM	Official Delegates	-	-	-	-	0	0
	Groups/Associations	1	-	1	4	6	11.32
EDO	Official Delegates	-	-	-	-	0	0
	Group/Associations	1	-	1	-	2	3.77
RIVERS	Official Delegates	1	-	-	1	2	3.77
	Groups/Associations	3	-	2	1	6	11.32
DELTA	Official Delegates	1	-	1	1	3	5.66
	Groups/Associations	1	1	2	4	8	15.11
	TOTALS	8 15.09%	1 1.88%	7 13.20%	11 20.75%		

Source: Author's Fieldwork

Table 3:

Summary of 2005 and 2014 Niger Delta Agitations

OFFICIAL DELEGATES	STATES	2005 PERCENTAGE	2014 PERCENTAGE	TOTAL PERCENTAGE
	AKWA-IBOM	3.77	0	3.77
	EDO	3.77	0	3.77
	RIVERS	0	3.77	3.77

	DELTA	3.77	5.66	9.43
TOTAL				20.74
GROUPS/ASSOCIATIONS	AKWA-IBOM	11.32	11.32	22.64
	EDO	0	3.77	3.77
	RIVERS	11.32	11.32	22.64
	DELTA	15.11	15.11	30.22
TOTAL				79.27

Source: Author's Field work

Results

Of all the 4 variables that represent the heart of the Niger Delta cause as operationalized in tables 1 and 2, agitation was highest for 'Resource Control' with a total of 43.39 percent (22.64% + 20.75%), followed by 'Derivation/True Federalism' with a total of 28.29 percent (15.09% + 13.20), 'Minority Rights' agitation with a total of 24.52% (9.43% + 15.09%), and the least being 'Self-determination' with a total of 3.76 percent (1.88 + 1.88%). From Table 3, we learn that 'Groups/Associations' led the agitation for the Niger Delta cause with a total percentage of 79.27, a very sharp contrast and far above the 20.74% figure from the official delegates during the two conferences.

Discussions

Over the years, the efforts emanating from the aforementioned movements, organizations and their leadership have no doubt brought about a reduction in the number of conflicts induced by oil. The amnesty programme, for instance, had by 2010 orchestrated a rise in the volume of oil production to ensure steady revenue from crude oil and gas export.

A patriotic leadership requires vision, a vision nurtured by the individual's own historical experiences, where he/she is coming from. Ken Blanchard (2003) adds that 'vision is knowing who you are, where you are going, and what will guide your journey'. This paper, for strong reasons, took an excursion into the political history of the origin and persistence of domination of ethnic minorities not only by the ethnic majorities but, most importantly, the feudal northern oligarchy. This domination has remained irrespective of whether the regime is military or civilian, with a political structure that is more unitary than federal. If there is any one geopolitical zone or region that paid the heaviest price for Nigeria's militarist-unitary arrangement, it is the Niger Delta region, with its leaders like Chief E. K. Clark serving as the conduit or channel after the demise of the first republic to sustain and consolidate the hegemony of the feudal North. It is however, morally reassuring that he seems to have realized this in his later life to electrify and champion various agitations in pursuit of the Niger Delta cause. By and large, the Niger Delta leaders have

participated in both military and civilian governments at the federal level that have historically perpetuated the injustice and exploitation of the Niger Delta. Only Ken Saro-Wiwa and his MOSOP loyalists might have been exceptions.

There is actually nothing wrong with participating in the government of the day, per se, but patriotic leadership requires that leaders and representatives of the region work with the larger goal of the Niger Delta's transformation and emancipation in mind. Take for instance, the equity stake of 10 percent demanded by the Niger Delta host communities in the PIB. While the House of Representatives approved 5 percent, the Senate approved only a paltry 3 percent. This is a very sharp contrast as noted by Alechenu (2021), to the approval given by both Houses of Parliament for 30 percent of oil and gas profits to be used to fund oil prospecting in the Chad frontier basins, which has been going on for years without success. It is not only a sharp contrast but an embarrassment to the Niger Delta representatives in parliament. One can also cite the perennial paucity of funds for the NDDC to execute its projects and ask, what have the National Assembly members from the Niger Delta states done when the Federal Government withhold funds from the NDDC?

This point has been acknowledged by Darah while writing from the perspective of the political economy of natural resource rights to state 'how post-war Nigeria has treated the Niger Delta as a defeated and conquered territory'. Indeed, this started with the enthronement of Caliphate Colonialism (Chinweizu) in post-colonial Nigeria. This game has been on for so long, and the Niger Delta leadership are apparently neck deep in playing supportive roles with the feudal oligarchs of the north. There has always been a leadership making demands quite alright, agitating and pontificating for sure. However, it is "not yet Uhuru" for the Niger Deltans:

A leader believes in what he is doing, the goal he is trying to reach, the cause he exposes, and that transcends him. He is willing to sacrifice even himself to accomplish that task. It takes courage, decisiveness, persuasiveness, humility and competence (Jim Clemmer & Art Mcneil, cited in Aderibigbe, 2017: 23).

Conclusion

The result from Table 3 above is that official state delegates representing the mouthpiece of the various state governments in the Niger Delta were not as concerned about issues of minority rights and self-determination as the citizens of the Niger Delta. The memoranda submitted by them focused more on broader national issues than on the concerns of their constituents.

Again, the alliances formed with different majority ethnic groups by the past leadership of the Niger Delta before and after independence have not served the long-term interests and cause of the region. It has been more the case of one major ethnic group using the Niger Delta to either negotiate or consolidate its hegemonic position at the Federal level.

Also, Niger Deltans have been the underdogs in an exploitative relationship with the feudal North. They need a leadership that will take them, in the words of Kissinger, to 'where they have not been' (Aderibigbe, 2017, p.12).

More importantly, the Niger Delta leaders are so elitist, comfortable with the status quo, content with the sinecures or palliatives offered by the renter capitalist state through political appointments into corporate bodies where they may have aligned with dominant political structures, thereby limiting transformative leadership outcomes.

Recommendations

A patriot is someone who loves his people and his place with passion, and is ready to invest his energy, time and resources in defense of the territorial integrity of his people. For a Niger Delta leader, his/her patriotic agenda should extend beyond current agitations to include:

1. Demand for the inclusion of solid minerals under federal control as is presently applicable to crude oil mineral resources;
2. Demand for the return of the administrative and operational headquarters of the Oil majors to the Niger Delta;
3. In the context of today's federal structure, he/she should spearhead the emancipation of Niger Deltans from the hegemonic rule of the northern caliphate by mobilizing not only his own people, but identifying and seeking the support of sister Southern states and other minorities in the country to help fight a common anti-feudal cause.

In other words, the Niger Delta leader needs to engage leaders of other sections, but it should be an engagement without sacrifice and compromise of the Niger Delta's long term interests and developmental aspirations.

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